

Josie McNeely Blong- The Analyst You Know

Mindy: [00:00:00] Welcome to analysts Talk with Jason Elder. It's like coffee with an analyst, or it could be whiskey with an analyst reading a spreadsheet, linking crime events, identifying a series, and getting the latest scoop on association news and training. So please don't beat that analyst and join us as we define the law enforcement analysis profession.

One episode ahead time.

Jason: Thank you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder, and today my guest has four years of law enforcement analysis experience. She's a 2019 civilian employee of the year for Salisbury Police Department in North Carolina. She holds a master of science degree in law enforcement intelligence and analysis here to talk about law enforcement analysis in smaller departments.

Please welcome Josie Blong, Josie. How we doing?

Josie: I'm doing great. Jason. How are you?

Jason: I am doing very well. Shout out to Sheila Dorn. So she named names and recommended that I have you on the show, and here you are.

Josie: I am [00:01:00] here. Excited to be here. All

Jason: right. So we're gonna get into a couple of different topics today. We're certainly gonna talk about analysis in smaller departments. As I just mentioned, I, do want to talk about your master's degree, and you are one of the few people also that has taken both the fiat course for IEA and then the foundations of Crime Analysis course for I A C A.

So I do want to pick your brain on both those training courses. Absolutely. All right. So just as always, how did you discover the law enforcement analysis profession?

Josie: So, it's a fun story. I started out at U n UNC Charlotte where I got my bachelor's degree in criminal justice. But it took me a few tries to get there.

So I started out as a pre kinesiology major. I got to chemistry and I was like, you know what? I just, I don't think this is gonna be for me. Just wasn't, wasn't [00:02:00] a huge fan. And I started looking at more like public service fields and things like that. I got into a social work class and I was like, all right, yeah, I'll do social work.

A district attorney actually came and did a presentation in her class and they're talking about recidivism and different programs for felons and things like that. And I started asking some questions and I guess a little bit more controversial questions and, you know, and he said, after class, I want you to come talk to me.

And I said, sure. And I stopped to him and he. You're in the wrong field, you're not gonna hack it in social work, . And I just kinda looked at him and said, what do you mean? He was like, you need to go to criminal justice and you need to do it now. You're not gonna hack it here. So that day I literally left that class, went straight to my advisor and said, Hey, I think I'll try criminal justice now.

Yeah.

Jason: Did he tell you why, that you wouldn't hack it in social work?

Josie: Yeah. He said just by the conversations and the questions that you're asking, he was like, you are geared more [00:03:00] into the law enforcement side, mm-hmm. and enforcement and more crime prevention than you are for social.

and I, I tended to agree with him. I was like, you know, yeah, I know I don't wanna do sworn. And he was like, oh, there's plenty more things to do than just be a police officer. So that was kind of my kick in the right direction to where I needed to be. Yeah.

Jason: And then it's, it is interesting as I look back and talk to different people, you know, college is that opportunity to try something and know that, hey, that's just not for me.

And yeah, , it's a learning process, but it is one of those things you don't know until you try it.

Josie: Absolutely. And it took a lot of research for me to find really the, you know, the crime analyst type position. Cause I knew I didn't wanna be a sworn police officer or an agent or anything along those lines.

And I kind of started looking into you know, forensic side and analysis, and I was able to find an [00:04:00] internship, luckily within about 30 minutes from my college. And that was at the Union County Sheriff's Office with analyst Lori Kiker Chambers. So I spent a semester with her and just absolutely fell in love with the field.

Jason: All right. So what were, some of the things you really liked as an intern?

Josie: So she really helped me kind of realize it was more than just. Stats and numbers. She did a lot case support and case investigation. But it still had that academic side of the research and finding answers inside of the data and really just showing me that you can use your small resources to put them in the right areas where they're the most needed.

And for smaller agencies, that's absolutely crucial.

Jason: Hmm. Yeah. So when you look back now, what did you learn in that internship that helped you when you became an analyst?

Josie: So one of our, we had to [00:05:00] decide on a project that were, we were doing inside of the internship. And I did mine on juvenile crime and.

Education level. So I looked at all of their juvenile records and was able to discern what their level of education was versus their criminal history. And as you could probably expect the least amount of years they had of education, the more the longer or more severe their criminal history was.

And that kind of got me thinking, cause I come from a family of educators and teachers and things like that. So education has always been something that was pushed in my life and told like, Hey, you have to go to school. You have to make good grades. And seeing that there really is that correlation of if you don't do well in school, , you're dropping out of school early and things like that, you are more likely to lead a life of crime especially within that community that I was researching.

All right.

Jason: And then so how did you go from the [00:06:00] internship to Salisbury Police Department?

Josie: A very long and arduous road. I felt once I graduated I had a really hard time finding a job. And you know, my parents at this point were like, Hey, you

either do that or you work as a waitress or you, , go work at McDonald's, which you have to find a job.

So I started actually an insurance. And that was just not the place for me. But I was very thankful for the opportunity just to have a full-time job really. So I worked in insurance for a few years. And then I kind of went back, tried to go back to school for like digital forensics and the program I was actually in got cut.

So I wasn't able to finish that. So then I was working three jobs at once. You know, I'd wake up one day and be like, where am I supposed to go today? And I finally got my foot in the door at the district attorney's office in Covais County. So I was, I was feeling like, okay, at least I'm in the criminal justice field now, I feel mm-hmm.

That my education is going to good use. Cause at this point I only have a [00:07:00] bachelor's and I really loved it there. It got me thinking about the prosecution side and really like working with victims as well. I was assigned to a superior court, a d a that worked sex crimes and abuse cases along with murder cases.

And then just your run of the mill other felony cases. I was starting to think, hey, maybe I'll go to law school. Maybe that's gonna be where I'm gonna end up. Because finding a crime analyst job is really difficult. Where I am currently, cuz I live in a very small town and just about 80 drive is almost an hour to get to a bigger city.

But my hometown actually opened up a crime analyst position. It was gonna be their first position ever that they've had at the department. And the first position within about a 30 mile radius of the town as well. So that's really when I started applying and sending everything in.

And it was almost a six month turnaround time from when I applied to when I actually started. So I didn't hear anything for a [00:08:00] really long time and I was like, I guess I didn't get picked. , you know, Too bad and ended up getting the call the next day after I told my coworker, I was like, I don't think I got it.

And ended up getting a call the next day saying that they wanted me for a final interview.

Jason: All right. , so had you already gone on an interview, could you just say, was this the second

Josie: interview? Yeah, so I had sent in my application and then they had called and they said, Hey, you know, we're down to two.

We want you to come in and do a practical test and an oral board. So that was the same day and that was I think there were only maybe two or three of us left at that point. And then I got a conditional offer maybe a week later. Nice.

Jason: So what was the practical test like?

Josie: So it was actually created by a nearby analyst in High Point, I believe.

But it was your, you know, crime frequency questions or if you were given this data of data. , what can you tell me from it? But we had an hour to do it and it had some other questions. The difference between administrative and tactical and [00:09:00] strategic and analysis. And I mean, it was a test.

So I was ready for it. I actually went back to the Union County analyst, Lori, and spent a day with her just to kind of refresh my memory of everything. So I was really glad that I had that connection with her. Cause I said, Hey, I'm going to interview. It's been two and a half years since I've done any of this.

Can I come and sit with you? And she was like, yes, absolutely. So I came and sat with her and we kind of went back over the basics. I, I'm definitely a nerd at heart, so I'd already bought. Textbook and was like reading through the textbook, trying to kind of remember everything that I had learned. And I , I was prepared.

So I was glad it was a lot of stuff that had reviewed that was on that practical

Jason: Yeah. Good for you. For preparing. So what was the oral

Josie: board like? The oral board was odd because this was, this position, they never had it before. They, they pulled people from different areas of the city. So we had the GIS coordinator from the city, they had an HR [00:10:00] analyst.

They had a an analyst from a different jurisdiction. And then just. I think maybe it was, no, there weren't any sworn officers on it, which is what I kind of thought was odd. But they pulled all these different people in since they were asking questions about mapping and g i s and the analytics side of it.

So they really didn't have any kind of in-house experts on it, so they brought everyone else out. And they just went down, the questions, you know, what does GIS mean? How would you use a mapping system to benefit our depart? .

Jason: Hmm. Now, had you used g i s up until

Josie: that point?

I had not used it personally, but I had sat and watched the lady, I did my internship, I had sat and like watched her use it. So I knew about it. I knew what it could do. But as far as like getting myself into it and doing it myself, I had never done

Jason: it All Right. That's that's interesting. Hmm. And then, you were telling me in the prep call you were talking about this is your [00:11:00] hometown, you know, a lot of people there, and there was, there was some connection there between somebody that you knew outside the police department and this

Josie: position, right? Yes. So one of my references, I did not know this at the time, I knew he had worked at the Salisbury Police Department.

But I did not know, his rank. I didn't know anything about really his career, but we had always had a. , you know, social relationship as far as, you know, his kids and my sister went to school together. They were always at track meets and cross country meets and you know, I was just kind of the little kid running around.

Mm-hmm. and, you know, as I grew up, you know, he would be like, oh, what are you doing for school? What are you thinking about? And knowing that he was in the criminal justice field, I would meet him for lunch every now and then and just kind of pick his brain what can I do, you know, what agency should I look at?

And really just kind of leaning on him as a mentor. Once I got the job at Salisbury, I was walking around and I would see his picture hanging in people's offices. And I'm like, this is so weird. Like why [00:12:00] is, why is his picture up? And they're like, he is a legend here. And I was kind of putting it together and I.

Unknowingly, like I used him as my reference and he had such a sway on the department and had such a positive influence while he was there. I was like, this, I keep saying every time I run into him I'm like, I just can't thank you

enough for like, how well you represented me. And you know, you just really talked me up and I was like, I think that you're the reason I got this job.

And of course, you know, oh no, you did that all yourself, you know, I just had a few good things to say about you. So I was like, wow, this leveraging personal relationships in the professional environment really was able to kind of get me a step up ahead and I'm, I'm really glad that I know him and I'm glad that I was able to use him as one of my reference.

Yeah. What's his name? His name is Steve Whitley.

Jason: , and what was his highest rank at the department?

Josie: So they've changed our rank structure a little bit, but I believe he was a deputy [00:13:00] chief or mm-hmm. , something along those lines.

And I, to me, I always saw like the very like, fun and, you know, just laid back personality. But from the stories I hear, he was just a very like no nonsense professional. You do what you're expected to do. And he had very high expectations of people and was someone who got results and did. Did things by the book and did them well.

Yeah. Nice.

Jason: Hmm. You mentioned law enforcement analysis and the difficulty to get in , and it's so important to have somebody speak for you. And somebody may argue that that shouldn't be the case, but I, I tell you what, the folks are going through these and they're going through a bunch of data.

They're going through resumes and everybody's on paper may look the same and, but if , they're gonna talk to somebody they trust and say, Hey, what about so-and-so? And if they can be spoken [00:14:00] for it, it just gives you a leg up in the whole entire process. And that's why I think internships, volunteering, whatever you can do to have somebody within the department speak for you, just pays dividends.

throughout.

Josie: Absolutely. I always say you have to be your own first advocate, but then you always have to take that next step and have someone else advocating for you. So using that kind of structure as, hey, I had to advocate for myself to him for him to go and then speak for me as a reference. Yeah.

Jason: And it, it, it, I'm sure he gleaned that your critical thinking skills, right. I'm sure when as you are eating lunch and you're just picking his brain and asking different questions like that showed him just your entire thought process. Absolutely.

So let's, I guess get into, you arrive on the scene, , , what are you getting into when you started at Salisbury?

Josie: Oh, I had no idea what I was getting into. [00:15:00] So, you know, coming out I'm maybe 22, 23 at this point. This is my first time kind of really getting into the crime analysis department and. At first they have me sitting in an office with their police planner. So she handled a lot of the administrative work and we share an office for about a month.

And after a while, they finally moved me upstairs with their detective division. And at this point is where they really just, they threw me to the wolves. And , I kept saying, you know, they threw me right in the deep end and they just hoped I knew how to swim. Because it was brand new, it was something that they had never experienced before.

So they were really leaning on me and my expertise. Or like I said then my lack of expertise in really developing this program and this division and building it from the ground up because there was nothing there. Mm-hmm. . We did have a great assistance from Idea Analytics through our [00:16:00] grant that we had received.

We were a project site for. I believe it's the S B I the b j A would come in and they would say, oh, this is a city that needs help because they're violent crime or resource allocations. And that's kind of how they started learning about crime analysis was through this assistance program.

And so I had a little bit of assistance from them as far as coming in and saying, Hey, this is how you set this up, or this is how these are some ideas, these are some products, but like, this is your unit, so make it, which make it out to how you want. So I spent a lot of time kind of digging into the data and the things that they already asked for, for their current stats.

They just did a very basic kind of part one crimes we're looking at this time compared to last year, compared to the month, compared to the quarter, compared to the year and the way things were being done, is the, I would, it was a. , it was previously the [00:17:00] police planner. They would read every single report about burglaries to find out if it was residential or commercial.

And, you know, there were things in their r m s system that you could, Hey, if you just plug in this right here and it will count it for you whenever we pull our, our stats. So I went through about four years of reports putting through whether they were commercial or burglary or a residential burglary or personal robberies or commercial robberies, things that were important to the department and the current administration.

And I was kind of getting at like, Hey, this is some things that we need to add in when we're doing a report so we don't do it on the back end. And that's probably where we hit our first hurdle because I was coming in and saying, Hey, you need to change the way you're doing. And it was a difficult process because then that's a re that's a learning curve for officers.

Especially the officers that have been there for 10, 15 years and now you're telling them to change a little we call it the special box cuz that [00:18:00] was where we were able to do it. And actually have a veteran officer to this day. He would, he calls me the box lady . And he is like, I hope you never take offense to that.

He was like, but you'll forever be the box lady. . . Because I would send follow up emails, Hey, you didn't fill out this box, can you fill it out? And they're just like, oh yes, . Yeah.

Jason: Because the box lady wants it.

Josie: Yes. And so I even did like a presentation for them about like, Hey, this is important because, you know, this is what I had to do because that wasn't there and these are the things we're trying to find out.

And of course that went over well cuz if you tell someone to do something but you don't tell them why they're less inclined to mm-hmm. To do that. And I think. overall, people, they took that well. But obviously it was a learning curve. It's something that they had never been expected or had to do before.

So now we, we only see a few times that things like that are forgotten. But that was something that definitely, it was kind of like pulling teeth in the beginning. To get them to say, [00:19:00] Hey, the reason we want to do this is because we want to be able to give you more data, better data. So you're, , patrolling the areas that truly need a higher presence due to, what they're seeing in that time period, rather than just haphazardly throughout the city without any real direction.

Yeah,

Jason: no, that's, that is impressive and it, and I'm glad that you were able to do that yourself, because I think in a lot of scenarios it wouldn't be the analyst presenting that data. , it would just come down from the top, , say, to do this and maybe in a memo or whatever it is. And it wasn't, may or may not be well explained as to why there's this new procedure.

Josie: Yeah. So I think it definitely started like that. I'd be like, Hey, I need this. Hey, I need this. And of course I'd send that up my chain of command. But once we started, something that I had wanted to get started was like monthly staff meetings, which they had staff meetings, but it, it wasn't to talk [00:20:00] about analytics that it wasn't to just to, to discuss statistics other than just going over the weekly crime stats.

And so I started breaking things down a little bit and showing them, Hey, this is our property crime. This is our three year average. This is what we had last year. This is what we have now. This is where we're going. And it was once those meetings kind of started as I was really able to advocate for myself.

To the anyone was welcome at these meetings for the staff meetings, but it was required for, I believe, the lieutenants and above to be there and encouraged for sergeants, depending on if they were on the road or not. And once they started showing up, they started seeing why these things were important, why data accuracy and data quality really meant something and why I was sending those emails saying, Hey, I need you to fix this, or, Hey, I need you to do this.

And understanding them, being able to see why that was important was really a shift in the culture and being able to really advocate for [00:21:00] the data and to be kind of a little bit stricter on, on the data coming in. Because as everyone says, you know, garbage in, garbage out. Well, we're trying to clean that up a little bit so we have.

better data to show you and present to you. Yeah,

Jason: You must have great presentation skills cuz I'm actually cringing here a little bit cuz I'm thinking about my time and man, I, I presented on several times throughout my career as an analyst, but the one time I was presenting at Cincinnati Police Department and I presented in front of all the, the majors on up.

And it was, it was something that the, the chief said he wanted this idea and he said, and deemed to me to, to create the idea and then implement it. And so I, I created, Implemented it, you know, did all the research, did all this other stuff and present it. And of course a lot of people weren't happy with it in the [00:22:00] room, cuz that meant more work for them.

And I understood that. But it was so annoying for me because one of the criticisms I got is like, well, you used I too much much What? I was like, what? What do you want me to use? You said, you should have said we. And I'm like, oh my goodness. To me . It just seemed to me like it was just nitpicky.

Mm-hmm. . I'm like, okay, but there is this culture there. I'll, I will say this , to those listening that you may run into this situation where, , I is. An acceptable pronoun in, in certain situations at police departments, but that's what I ran

Josie: into. Yeah. I will have to say and give credit where credit is due.

Our administration relatively, were pretty open to learning about the analytics side. There were a few that were kind of like, oh, I've been doing this for 25 years. What could you possibly tell me that I don't already know? But our chief and our deputy chief at the time, they were very [00:23:00] highly educated in in the criminal justice field as well as the analytics field.

They're really pushing stratified policing, problem oriented policing, community policing. They were really up to date and excited about something new coming in, as well as that urgency of like our city. is experiencing extreme amounts of violent crime. We have to do something, we have to try something different.

You know, our staffing is down, we're short-handed. Like this is, we've got to throw everything we have at this and really make it work. And just overall, I was met with just genuine kindness. Even if they didn't agree with what they were hearing or even if it didn't hold that much weight to them, they were still kind.

So I really appreciate kind of the way that they treated me and brought me in especially in the beginning because I was my own advocate and I had to kind of stand my ground and put my foot down a few times, be like, Nope, this is what the [00:24:00] data says. I know this is not what we wanna hear, but this is what it's showing us.

And overall I think that kind of gained their respect also is like not just falling towards. The, oh, okay, well we'll look at it different. Or maybe there's a

different way I could pull it or things like that. It's just keeping your ethics at the front is that this is how you pull data, this is why we pull it this way, and always being able to explain that.

Because then some would go back and try to like, pull their own data and be like, oh, well I'm getting. Mm-hmm. and you know, going head to head with a, a lieutenant or a captain and telling them like, no, you're wrong, I'm sorry, was definitely nerve-wracking the first few times.

Jason: Well that is so incredibly annoying, when someone's gonna argue over, you know, a handful of records and you, you as an analyst, analyst have to go through and, and spend all that time going through just to figure out like, oh, well I counted this and you didn't count that, but you know, at the end of the day, we're off by five in a month and [00:25:00] it is Right.

You know, it's, it That's super annoying. And, but it sounds like after you'd been working a little bit and tweaking the reporting and whatnot, it seems like the reporting would've had so much more color. Mm-hmm. and so much, because you go through these, you find patterns and trends and problems and issues, and then , what's gonna happen is leaders problem solvers are gonna start asking questions of the data and then, well, how many of these crimes are this?

How many victims were this? How many locations were this? And that's where all of that information that you're bringing, you start reporting on that is like, okay, well it's all right

Josie: here. Mm-hmm. . Yeah. And one of the great things too, and this didn't happen until maybe we were about two years in at Salisbury, but we had a specialty unit called ncat, the Neighborhood Crime Abatement team.

And , I like to call them, they were our heavy hitters, our door kickers. They're going [00:26:00] out, they're trying to find the violent crime. They are, you know, really circulating our high gang activity areas. They're run into our hot calls and taking them over. And after a while we started holding biweekly crime meetings.

So every two weeks we'd have a report, a short, like 15 minute report about violent crime for the last two to three weeks, just depending on what kind of our timeframe was looking at, where it was happening, who was involved and just kind of getting into the nitty gritty for just that two weeks.

And then they would actually change their schedule based on what we were seeing in the last two to three weeks. So if our violent crimes started pulling more towards the middle of the week, their four day schedule would change to the middle of the week. And these are, , you know, some of the officers that I really look up to, still to this day, you know, they're coming to me and they say, where do you need me?

Tell me where to go. And these are guys with many years of experience and training and you [00:27:00] know, some of them were FTOs at the time and they're coming to me as a two year analyst and saying, , I will go where you tell me to , tell me where to be and why I need to be there and who do I need to look for.

And so once that kind of took off, that's kind of when my confidence as an analyst really grew because I'm seeing people. Take the information that I'm able to provide them and put it to use and not sit there and nitpick or question or, you know, they, they take it at face value because they trust the information that I'm giving

Jason: them.

Yeah. And people want to help, right? , they don't want to just be out there just for the sake of being out there. Right. Yeah.

Josie: Giving them a

Jason: purpose. Yeah. Like where can I be the most effective? Absolutely.

Rhea: Hi, my name is Rhea Gerstenkorn and my advice to you is to not be that analyst that people refer to as to what not to do. You don't wanna be that person, so make sure [00:28:00] that your products are of quality. Make sure that you're doing what you need to do. Ask questions if you're not sure, but don't be the reference point of what not to do.

Kristen: Hi, this is Kristen Lottman. My public service announcement is to say, get your face out of your phone and your fingers off your keyboard, and make that face-to-face contact because that's how you'll connect with other people.

Jason: This brings us to your analyst badge story, and for those that may be new to the show, the analyst bad story is the career defining case or project that an analyst works, and for you. It's , a tragic event of a college basketball shooting.

Josie: Yes. So kind of to lead up to that, we have the Regional Crime Information Center and in our Crime information center we have access to video surveillance throughout the city.

So probably 150 different surveillance cameras [00:29:00] all fed into this one room. That is where I currently work out of. So a couple years, actually it was last year, I believe. I'm sorry. , we get a call that there was a shooting in progress at a local college. And a lot of this is still under investigation or still in trial, so there's some information that I can share.

Mm-hmm. What's been put out in the newspaper, obviously. And at this time it is a high school event that is being hosted at the college. So all of the basketball teams in the county are having this, they call it the Christmas tournament or the Sammy Tournament. So there's probably five, 600 people there from all around the county.

And the call comes out that there's been a shooting and multiple people are hit. , you know, the whole college is in lockdown and there's multiple agencies that are in route treating this as an active shooter. I had multiple of my players. I was a softball coach at the time. A lot of [00:30:00] my girls were playing basketball or they're there watching.

Thankfully I was not there. My family was not there watching cuz we normally do go to that every year. And you know, it just immediately turns into emergency management mode pretty much. I was only a week out from shoulder surgery and my associate analyst that was also works in the center.

She had covid at the time. So we were both down for the count. But my lieutenant at the time calls me, he. Is there any way that you can get here because we need all hands on deck. Mm-hmm. . And at the time I'm like, I can't drive , but let, let's see what I can do. And my husband was able to drive me up there and it's about 8, 8, 9 o'clock.

We're actually following in another officer that's coming from the same direction. So we're just on his tail coming through the city and I get dropped off. You know, I'm in a sling. I can't carry things that can't open the door. But we get there and we start going through, you know, what do we know about our victims?

What do we [00:31:00] know about possible suspects? Do we have any camera footage in the area? Our digital forensic guy was actually on scene at the college

pulling video surveillance and sending it to us. It turned out there was an altercation that happened in kind of the lobby area where the concession stand.

And as we so typically see here lately, especially in our community, a fight starts and then shortly after that a gun's pulled and shots are fired. . I believe about 10 to 12 rounds were fired and only two juveniles were struck which they recovered and ended up being okay, but obviously created absolute mass panic.

. Were they

Jason: the intended target?

Josie: The, the group that was fighting, but I do not believe that they were the intended target. Okay, so they're, yeah, they're just, I believe they were by bystanders, correct.

Jason: I gotcha. Correct. And so these folks shooting at each other, did they know each other or was this just one of those things that they're standing in line and they start fighting and one thing led leads to another and.[00:32:00]

Chaos

Josie: yeah, they were definitely familiar with each other. Where we're, where I'm from, it's a very small town. And our gang structure is a little bit different than what you would normally see. A lot of these kids, they go to school together, but they may be in different gangs or , they're in different gangs, but they lived right next door to each other.

And so there's even that personal connection of, oh, we played basketball together and we grew up together and we're friends, but now we're an opposing gangs. So when it comes to gang activity, you know, we're against each other, but you may see us hanging out, you know, at the basketball. on Friday night.

So it can be very odd, can be very confusing because there's not that clear line in the sand of you do your thing and I'll do mine. Those relationships kind of intertwine themselves. So once the investigation really got kicked off, I started getting texts and calls from my high school kids that were there.

You know, my players, my athletes, and they're sending information in, they're saying, [00:33:00] Hey, I heard it was this person. Hey, I heard it was this person. Hey, I have a video. And so I'm going in. I'm o and I'm already laying

out for them. Hey, we've got. Video, we've got possible suspects. Is this matching anything that we're pulling?

And it did turn out that one of the, one of my players was able to send me a name that it actually ended up being being correct. So we spent , above 40 of the 48 hours in that center together. And , there were two different shooters. We were able to get them in custody within 48 hours.

A lot of open source research went into this, a lot of video surveillance kind of tracking cars through the city saying, Hey, we saw this car leaving at a high rate of speed. Was it just a concerned parent and fan trying to get out of there or was this someone that had something to do with it?

There are definitely a few vehicles that we were able to track through the city and say, okay, they're parked over here. Let's go see and get out and talk with them or get a reason for the stop so we can get out [00:34:00] with them to see if they had anything to do with what was going on at the college.

Jason: Hmm. And so that's fascinating. And you're doing this all with a bummed wing? Yes. Right. . So, so cuz I was like, one thing I was thinking, I was just like, oh, you can't type correctly. That would be so annoying to me that I wanna be searching all this stuff in the databases . But, you know, and it's also fascinating the connection that you have, right? This isn't yes, you're dealing with all the police data that , you have at your disposal , once you get there. The cameras, the databases, but then it's the, the people that you know that go to this school on a personal level, That help with this

Josie: investigation?

Yeah, leveraging personal relationships. Being from a small town and then subsequently going and working for, , the second largest police agency in this small county has really been a benefit for me because I'm able to lean on [00:35:00] that relationship that I have with people and use that in the professional environment.

Whether they just feel comfortable talking to me or, , I've grown up with their kids or I went to school with them. They see a familiar face and they're much more willing to share the information that they have or bring you in on, you know, meetings and other agencies or, you know, anything like that where normally there's that barrier of, Hey, I need to get to know you.

And then we're. Talk shop. But it's, it's just that kind of natural flow of information sharing that's really been successful for me.

It was a massive team effort. A lot of collaboration between other agencies.

A lot of, , pulling people off the street and saying, Hey, for now you're gonna be attached to the detectives and you're gonna do whatever they need you to do. And our center became the hub for this investigation. So if people had information, they came to us, they shared. We kind of vetted that information[00:36:00] and then passed it along to investigators, which is a lot of our job duties is people will send us things and it's gonna be our job to say, okay, what's legitimate information?

What needs to be passed on, what's urgent? Cuz people kind of come to us first before , finding the investigator. So we're, I say sometimes we're like just a little networking center because they'll come in and we'll be like, oh nope, you need to go talk to this person. So we send them on that way.

Our, the other analyst, she was able to do a lot of social media monitoring. She had Covid at the time, so she was obviously stuck at home. But was able to do a lot of social media monitoring from there and provide us a lot of useful information too.

Jason: Yeah, nice. And I was just thinking with you working so much when you were supposed to be off, I mean that gives you a lot of, department cred, right?

Yeah. and people are like, ah, she came in on her day off and it got a bummed wings. So that's pretty

Josie: impressive. Yeah, they're definitely like, aren't you supposed to be at home? Yes. Yes, I'll assist you . Yeah.

Jason: And even [00:37:00] the other analyst that's doing , the thing at home, try helping out. I mean, that should be applauded as well because , it is a team effort and there's various ways , to be helpful.

Yeah,

Josie: absolutely.

Jason: So then with , the information all coming in, for every one good tip, you probably have a hundred that aren't . Like that's just, there's a lot of, noise, but that's what analysis is. It's cutting out the noise and, and focusing on what's really important.

And, and in this case, it. That's what these centers are really for is , when stuff happens that you, there's a coordinated effort and you find out you have a data flow and you, you try to make sure that everybody is on the same page and you. Try to work through all this thing because there's a lot happening at once and you have to have a little bit of organized chaos, [00:38:00] right?

Josie: Yeah. I think organized chaos is the best way to put it. Our center typically becomes kind of the hub for any kind of major incident and we started having to put, , special protocols in place of like, when something kicks off, what are our roles? Mm-hmm. . And we were able to get our lieutenant to get on board of buying us some noise canceling headphones and with two analysts in the center one will kind of take charge of information coming in the phone, calls the questions, and the other person will put on their noise canceling headphones and they're cranking out a bulletin. You know, they're putting it together, sending it out. that was some of the things that we really had to work through.

The first year that we were open as the information center was how do we handle this stuff? Because we have so many people coming in, so many people calling our phones, asking questions trying to get information that one of us wasn't able to stop and get the information out at a regional base. And that's [00:39:00] where we came up with our protocol is pretty much like if you aren't the investigating detective and you are not a member of the administration or the sergeant over the violent crimes or things like that, then you weren't allowed in the room.

That this is kind of like restricted access, that we do not need 12 people coming in. Hey, can I look at the video? Hey, can I see the video? We'll call you all in at the same time. You can look at it, you can ask your questions and then you can get back out on the road and do what you need to do. So there's definitely been some.

learning curves and growing room that we've had. Take a step back and say, Hey, how could we do this better? Because the last time this happened, it did not work. . Yeah,

Jason: no, and I think you do that each and every time cuz every case is different, every situation's different. But then you figure out like, okay, that, you

know, this was not good cuz I'm a, I'm just imagining by what you just said, that there was just too many people in the kitchen while this stuff's going [00:40:00] on.

And that's why you had to limit who was gonna see what when. Correct. Yeah. Hmm. Let's talk a little bit more about the crime center because this was an example of how this worked out well how did this crime center come to be?

Josie: So I think it all kind of, and a little bit was before my time, but it all kind of initiated with this B j A grant that we were awarded when I came in as an analyst. So when I came in as an analyst they started talking about, hey, We're gonna apply for this smart Policing Initiative grant that will help us by and retrofit a regional crime center with a heavy focus on camera surveillance.

So that award, that grant was awarded in 2019 and at the time our chief was Chief Jerry Stokes. So he was huge in getting this getting this grant and approved and doing all the [00:41:00] presentations and kind of the formalities of it. And once that was finalized is when our cross center really kind of took off.

We also had some other grants the United Way grant that was able to focus on the opioid epidemic. So we were able to get grant money for cameras with high rates of overdoses or drug activities, which oftentimes overlapped with our violent crime areas. And we are slowly able to roll out more and more cameras.

Our camera footage is saved for 30 days. We treat camera footage similar to body cam footage, so it's required for a court order or subpoena for the public or anyone to get access to it. And we did a lot of public private partnerships as well, so housing complex, they say, Hey, we'll go half and half with you on the cost on these cameras and you guys can have access to them.

So we have probably four or five different housing complexes within the city [00:42:00] that have cameras and we have access to. From there. It was also the bigger part of it was really kind of our, the analyst side of it is, yes, we have all these cameras but there's also these analysts here for your resource as well.

Cause there's about 11 other jurisdictions within our county. Obviously we only work for Salisbury Police Department, but we do a lot of collaboration with our sheriff's office and with other agencies that don't have the resource of an analyst. So they will come to us and be like, Hey, we need to know everything that you have on this person.

Are you able to help me out? And even though we work for Salisbury now, we're transitioning and we're working with the sheriff's office, or we're working with the Granite Quarry Police Department. So we always say that, you know, our paycheck comes from the city of Salisbury, but we work for everyone.

Jason: Yeah. Gotta keep the sense of humor in your job. Yeah. Yeah. , so, with Salisbury though? I don't know if it's a [00:43:00] unique situation or not. You were talking about it in the prep call and it got me thinking. It, it's like, I wonder how many other jurisdictions are like that because you, you mentioned that Salisbury only has about 36,000 people in there.

Correct. And yet it's a smaller jurisdiction, but has. A bigger crime problem per capita, mainly based up to where it's located. So just for the audience to give them an understanding of why this , smaller jurisdiction would, I got so much grants I think that'll help folks understand.

Josie: Yeah.

So Salisbury is kind of uniquely positioned between some of the biggest cities in, in North Carolina. We are a 45 minute drive to Charlotte about a 1550 minute drive to Greensboro and about a 45 minute drive to Winston-Salem and I 85. That takes you to all these places, cuts right through the center of Salisbury as well as.

Railroad Amtrak system as [00:44:00] well. So we get a lot of traffic. A lot of our property crime and motor vehicle crime and things of that nature are fueled from the interstate. People will jump off the interstate, hit our hotel, our hotel strip and jump back on and, you know, you start contacting these other agencies and you'll see.

you know, 50 miles up the interstate. Another town got hit 50 miles down the other side of the interstate. Another agency was hit. So we always say all roads lead to Salisbury because for some reason everyone is drawn to Salisbury. And we end up with a lot of , our people committing crimes.

They're not just staying in Salisbury to do it, they're going to Charlotte, they're going to Winston, they're going to Greensboro. A ton of our Nibin leads through the ATF hit in Winston-Salem. So we, we get , the guns that are being used or being used here, and they're being used in Winston and that's 40 minutes down the road.

And we've also had a lot of hits directed to Greensboro as well, so we [00:45:00] know. Our people are traveling to these bigger cities and then coming back home and it's just, it's, sorry . But yeah, I think that just kind of drives our, our violent crime as they're, they are so mobile put their way in their heads here.

Jason: Yeah. Hmm. And so then you have the jurisdictions that you mentioned outside of Salisbury that may be on that 85 corridor. , but. In a situation where they're an even smaller department that most likely can't afford to hire an analyst.

Josie: Right. So with Salisbury, there's only 36,000 residents. Our entire county we're the largest city agency.

Our sheriff's office is the only office that's bigger. But after us we have about 80, 85 sworn officers or we're slotted for that many. After that the, probably the biggest agency is maybe 20 officers, and that's pretty generous. So there really isn't room [00:46:00] for analysts there. Most of them don't even have a full detectives division.

They may only have one or two detectives. So that plays at their disadvantage, which they have to lean on us and our center to be able to get some of that intelligence information or just manage that information flow. Because they just don't have the manpower for it. And we, we've been lucky to have these positions in this center growing.

But obviously as a small agency with a big crime problem, our resources and allocations are, not what you would see at Charlotte or Greensboro. When we're dealing with the. Kind of per capita crime as they are. Good

Jason: deal. So, so what's next for you in, in this center with this

Josie: position? I think right now the biggest thing is we did a really, really good job when we rolled out the center as far as like marketing it to the outside agencies that we [00:47:00] kind of not forgot about, but we failed to do that same job internally.

So even though people knew about it, you know, they weren't quite sure what we were doing up there because, you know, we're behind a locked door and it's not like freely you can just walk in and walk out of it. So I think this year we're really trying to focus on getting our own officers more involved with the center.

And that comes through video surveillance requests. Hey, I. A crime that happened here, there's a nearby camera. But taking that a step further and getting them more involved in what's going on in their zones and the questions that they want answered. If they're wondering, you know, what, what neighborhood in my zone is more likely to get motor vehicle crime or property crime?

And having them ask those like critical thinking questions to get them. More involved in the process is kind of what we're focusing on this year. All right.

Jason: And what did you do to receive the [00:48:00] civilian employee of the year in 2019?

Josie: So that was my first year or my first, I think eight months at the department.

So that was just that the initial like crime analysis, push, getting everything rolled out. Oh, okay. And getting everybody on board. So that's kind of, , being thrown into the water, but, , they threw me a life vest eventually. .

Jason: All right. Good deal. All right. Let's talk about your master's degree now and Michigan State and you just finished it last May and , I find it fascinating.

It's a master's of science in law enforcement intelligence and a. So just give us the highlights of, the program. Sure.

Josie: Yeah. So Ghost Spartans, . So what kind of got me leaning towards Michigan State was the fiat class that I'm sure we'll talk about a little bit later. That was in Georgia.

One of the teachers there was Sheila Dorn, and she was actually a professor with that program. So when I started looking at master's programs, I didn't wanna do just a blanket criminal [00:49:00] justice because I don't need to know how to run a police department because I'm never gonna be. a police chief or mm-hmm.

you know, those type types of things. I was like, I really wanna narrow in and focus in on this law enforcement intelligence and analysis side. So I was able to find Michigan State. I heard of great things about it. And obviously with, you know, some of the great minds such as Sheila Dorn and Dr.

Carter running that program. I was really just drawn to it. So I started applying and got into the program and it was really great. It focused a lot on intelligence writing and intelligence products how to use those resources, how to really dig in and. Evaluate certain situations and resource allocation.

I did take a few crime analysis classes as well in advanced crime analysis classes which focused a lot using Excel as your main product and as well as the ARC Pro mapping. I took that with professor Kathleen Gallagher.[00:50:00] The classes with professor David Carter were also just, they were incredible.

He is, you know, a pinnacle in the crime analysis field and being able to learn under him was a true privilege. I've really enjoyed the program. It took my analysis writing. and intelligence product writing, definitely to a whole nother level. Kind of digging into that information and being able to put plans together for how you would respond.

I was able to use that recently. In one of our cases, we were experiencing an influx in threatening letters that were being left in these random locations threatening letters of mass violence. And as we were able to collect all of these and go through and read them, you could see that ex escalation and violence and planning and, you know, signs of, you know, just horrific sexual deviant deviancy.

And then threats of, you know, shooting up a school and shooting up festivals. And we had [00:51:00] multiple festivals planned over the next couple weeks and, you know, I was able to take all this information and take it to our administration and be like, Hey, listen, this. This is a real threat. We need to take this seriously.

We need to up our security, up our surveillance. We need more officers. You know, you plan a festival and maybe there are three officers. We were able to, with the information that we found, we were able to convince them to, you know, move it to 10 to 12 officers instead. And having that background and training I really was able to lean on that and be , this is everything that we've learned.

This is why I believe the way that I do. The department really encouraged me to do this program. So once I did it and we had this type of issue come up, I was really able to lean back on that education and say, this is what I was trained to do.

Let's discuss how we can better prepare for this upcoming event because it ends at risk. Hmm.

Jason: Now, do you, do you think this program is for all [00:52:00] analysts or would there be something given somebody a certain situation that maybe this wouldn't be the best program for him or her?

Josie: I think overall it, I think it's anyone who's wanting to be an analyst if, if the money is worth it for you to spend on a master's degree.

Then yeah, I would definitely recommend it from an educational standpoint. Absolutely. Obviously being in a public sector field, that salary doesn't always match up with the money that you spend on a Master's, so that's really the only kind of hindrance to it is that that is it, it can be a pretty expensive program versus on what your income may be in the end.

It may not be as worth it for the money. Yeah,

Jason: that makes, yeah, the return return on investment.

Josie: Yeah. Yeah, that's a good way

Jason: to put it. . Yeah. Cuz we get from time to time we'll get folks that are on the show that don't have a college degree, period. Right? Right. And so you get into the idea of.

Bachelor's [00:53:00] degree experience a certification and or a master's degree. I mean, there's various ways to be educated in order to be an

Josie: analyst. Absolutely. And I'm, I'm definitely a huge proponent of that. You do not need formal education to be successful. However, this program. , brings all the pieces in one place for you.

So whereas you may just have a bachelor's or you just came in with a high school education, and then you're able to piece all these different trainings together and self-learning and, you know, things of that nature. This, this program does a great job of just bringing all of those things into one place and teaching you A to Z in a two year period.

Jason: All right. . Let's move on then. I do want to pick your brain a little bit on the two fundamental classes that you took for both the associations here, the IACA's. Foundations in crime analysis and then IALEIA's [00:54:00]

foundations and intelligence analysis training, and , I've talked about both of them on this program, but I don't know if I've talked to anybody that's taken both classes.

So I'm curious to get a compare and contrast between the two training courses. Sure.

Josie: So I took the first class through I c a the 12 week program when I first started. So that's been about four years ago now. And then I most recently took the Fiat Foundations of Intelligence Analysis class through AEA about two years ago starting with the crime analysis one.

It's a great, great program for beginners. It's people that are just now getting their feet wet in the crime analysis field. Which that's what was recommended to me is that. You know, I, I knew a little bit and then this would help me with a solid foundation. A lot of the pushing factors behind doing these classes for me is I want a solid foundation for me to grow and expound upon.

So the crime analysis [00:55:00] one, it's very straightforward. You're doing your a little bit of criminal behaviors, linking crimes, the forecasting had a little bit of mapping mixed into there. As well as your basic statistics and introducing you to the different types of crime analysis.

A absolutely recommend it for beginners. I am not one that absolutely loves online classes, so it can be a little dry. , which is why I enjoyed the fiat class more because it was an in-person program and that I just tend to learn better in person. Mm-hmm. . But the fiat class was awesome for the intelligence side, so analysis side, definitely recommend the I S E A if you're looking for more intelligence and case support side definitely recommend the fiat class.

From there, it was just much more in depth of. My, my biggest thing was like, how can I better help my detectives in their cases? And I [00:56:00] felt like the fiat class really set up that structure of how to be that case support and investigative analyst. A lot of work was done on the just timelines and crime frequency timelines is something that we use all the time as far as linking our violent crime information and our gang activity.

And a lot was put into how to utilize the in intelligence cycle and always going back for the feedback, which tends to be the most forgotten step is going back and saying like, Hey, did this actually work for you or would you prefer to. See it differently. And I think a lot of analysts struggle with that because everyone struggles with someone saying that they don't like their work product.

But like seeking out that approval or disapproval can be a intimidating, intimidating aspect of the job.

Jason: Yeah. I I also [00:57:00] find for newer analysts, the recommendations step in the intelligence cycle. Yes. That can be a daunting step as well. . So in, in terms of fiat, is that something you would recommend for newer analysts as well?

Josie: Yeah. If, if, I would say I, I would recommend Fiat if that's the type of work you're gonna be doing. Mm-hmm. . , obviously there's that divide of you may have a crime analyst that all they're doing is administrative statistics and they're not doing anything other than that. If there's no case support involved or kind of investigative analysis involved, probably not something that I would recommend just because it's outside of the wheelhouse that is your job responsibility.

But for someone like me or that works at a fusion center where intelligence is kind of a main, a really big push in your agency, then I would definitely recommend it. And it's is taught by wonderful professors and teachers and people that have [00:58:00] so much experience in the field. I would, I would definitely be having that one on.

All

Jason: right, good. All right. So I actually have a new segment for the show, and you're gonna be my first person that I'm gonna ask this question to. And so I'm curious to know in law enforcement analysis, if you have a hot take, do you have maybe an unpopular opinion or is something that may stir up the horn's nest?

Josie: Oh, let's see. Okay. Let me really think about this one. I think maybe my hot take would be gosh, maybe it's not much of a hot take or maybe more of like what I wanna see better be done better. A lot of these agencies or a lot of these associations that do classes it's kind of based off of these huge agencies that have such high amounts of like people and crime that it, it's not relatable for smaller agencies.

And so you get these resources and they're like, oh yeah, you know, you [00:59:00] just need this, this, and this. And your, your in is like 3000. You're like, oh, lemme see 30. I only see 30 vehicle break-ins a year. You know? So it's kind of difficult to take some of these big ideas and scale them down. And I

think that's where we're, doing a disservice to the smaller agencies of there's all these big great ideas, but then they're not always scalable.

So seeing more scalable information for smaller jurisdictions with unique crime problems.

Jason: Yeah, I was just talking with somebody about basics, basic, basic training, basic textbook for analysis. And , it's can be difficult because not all departments are the same and not all resources are the same.

So, If I'm telling somebody to do something in Excel, it's excel's usually easy cuz it's mostly available to everybody. So it's easy to teach from. [01:00:00] But if that department has, you know, some of these upper echelon tools, right? I'm not gonna suggest you do telephone toll analysis and Excel. If you have Data Hawk right?

Or cell Hawk, I guess it is. Right? If you have that at your disposal, then that's what you're using. You're not using Excel , to do telephone toll analysis. So it, it can be difficult to do a one size fit all or paint everybody with the same brush.

Josie: Yeah, definitely. I agree. Because it's like you go to these you know, these big conferences and, and things like that, and they're like, oh, you know, we, we were able to put.

Beautiful information together and direct our officers to be in this specific location, you know, this micro hotspot. And you know, we brought that back and tried to implement it at our agency and we're like, we'd have to look at six months of data to get a micro hotspot because , and at that point, you know, it's not as, It's, it's not doing what it's supposed to be doing.

So [01:01:00] sometimes it can be hard to take some of these practices back and really put them in place when the data just isn't there. Okay.

Jason: All right. Let's move on to personal interest then. And you've mentioned already that you are a softball coach, but what I find fascinating about you being a softball coach is that you were the assistant coach and your dad was head

Josie: coach.

Yeah. So my dad and I he is, he was my coach my entire life in softball. I grew up playing travel and tournament ball and everything like that, so he was always my coach. Once I graduated from college kind of moved back home. There was

an opportunity for him to start coaching at the middle school, and he needed help.

So I went and helped with him as, as well as another assistant coach. And then as time progressed, it was an opportunity for him at the high school as well. And I went along with him and we've been coaching together for about five or six years now.

Jason: So was there a time where you had to tell him that he was wrong?[01:02:00]

Oh,

Josie: many times. . My dad and I are like oil and water, but we both love softball. We love sharing the game with the younger generation and we definitely bump heads. Everybody's seen it. We are both two hot-tempered people. So we go at it and everybody just sits back and laughs, . But we've had a really good time.

I really enjoy doing that with him. But yeah, , it could get your blood pressure up for

Jason: sure. Yeah. And I, I give it to you with that travel ball. I hear folks talk about whatever sport it is and traveling all the expense and trying to coordinate all that, the time and effort of being in a travel league.

It's impressive of what y'all have to do.

Josie: Yeah, it was definitely it's something I really enjoyed as a kid. I mean, I was playing just about every weekend from the time I was about six years old till about 18. And as much as you know, effort and time that I sacrificed for it, it's some of the best memories.

So, and, and taught me a lot, . keeps your head on your [01:03:00] shoulders and you know, you have to be disciplined and determined and really a lot of things I took from playing at the travel level and you know, playing for my dad and then taking that and using it in a professional environment as far as like my work ethic and always being ready and willing and adaptive and it, it definitely made a difference in my life.

Jason: Yeah. So you mentioned also that you had shoulder surgery. Was the shoulder surgery due to softball?

Josie: Probably . I have really bad luck when it comes to any kind of like injuries and things like that. So I've actually had two knee surgeries shoulder surgery. I've had five concussions and three broken bones.

So if it's happened, I've done it. I'm no stranger to a sports injury or just plain bad luck.

Jason: I had a friend of mine that got a concussion and he said he didn't feel right for over a year.

Josie: Yeah. So that's something that [01:04:00] my dad and I are both very passionate about as far as sports concussions and protecting athletes.

He is probably one of the strictest coaches when it comes to any kind of concussion protocol or even if you just think you hit your head because it did have a lot of life-changing effects on me. I got three concussions kind of back to back to back within. about a year or so when I was in middle school, and it, it caused a lot of issues as far as just like migraines and vision tracking symptoms and things like that, where once I got older just still saw some subsequent issues from that.

And actually a concussion is what ended my softball career as my senior year of high school. Because after that they're like, it's just, it's too dangerous. It's not worth what the outcomes could be if you got another one. And just, you know, kind of putting my health in my body first is why I ended up stepping away from the sport.

Oh,

Jason: man. Well, just like anything else, you found a way to still be [01:05:00] involved,

Josie: so Absolutely. . That's why I love it so much. So,

Jason: all right. Very good. All right, well, our last segment to the show is Words of the World, and this is where I give the guests the last word. Josie, you can promote any idea that you wish.

What are your words to the world?

Josie: Protect your on peace. So protect your peace. Set professional boundaries. Set personal boundaries in your life. If you're getting overwhelmed,

step back and take a moment for yourself. Always be willing to listen, but that does not always mean you have to be willing to give an answer.

So protect your peace and put your mental health first.

Jason: Very good. Well, I leave every guest with you, given me just enough to talk bad about you later, . But I do appreciate you being on the show, Josie. Thank you so much. And you be safe.

Josie: All right. Thank you so much.

Mindy: Thank you for making it to the end of another episode of Analysts Talk with Jason Elder.

You can show your support by sharing this in other episodes found on our [01:06:00] website@www.lepodcasts.com. If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a suggestion for our next guest, Please send us an email at elliott_eight_podcast@gmail.com. Tell next time analysts keep talking.